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THE BUSINESS OF SYNODS AND PRESBYTERIES.

As members of the Presbyterian Secession Church, we have certainly no right to complain of either unkind feeling or bickerings in her public courts of judicature. We rejoice in the spirit of affection which is found so extensively to prevail among her ministers and elders. Subjects of discussion are, no doubt, occasionally presented, which put our cordiality to a severe test; but happily in such cases, and they are comparatively few, an animated debate, as it proceeds, creates or discovers more of the spirit of unanimity.

Presbyteries and Synods have usually some unpleasant work put into their hands. The disorders which prevail throughout the body over the whole country, are taken under consideration by these courts, and the consequence is, that strangers or others who may choose to "while away" an hour at a meeting of Synod, generally leave with an impression highly unfavourable to the religion of its members. Some who visit such meetings may perhaps be induced to go a little further, and look with great complacency on their own religious attainments, which probably *have a shadowy existence* when contrasted with ministerial degradation. What a wiseacre he is, who condemns the religious character of an entire body of professing Christians for the sake of a few instances of delinquency! How opposed to the mind of Him who said, If I find *ten righteous* in Sodom, I will not destroy the city! It were leaping too fast to a conclusion, to maintain that the whole population of a country are murderers, because we have some two or three of these men of blood brought up for trial at a court of assize. The infidel would smile at the weakling who should reason

thus; and yet, with vulture voracity, he gulps down the idiot charge, when it is insinuated or asserted against the ministers of the Gospel.

Exception is frequently taken to the *manner* in which business is conducted in our Synodical and Presbyterial meetings. A case is submitted which demands grave deliberation—members are expected to recollect that they are in a court of Christ—the feelings which are prejudicial to sound and calm investigation are to be kept under salutary control. But what is the scene which Synodical proceedings too often exhibit? The field of conflict—the arena of intellectual gladiatorship—the sickening spectacle of a war of words—a tumultuary mingling of angry voices in fierce and unbridled personalities. It is impossible to calculate the real injury done to religion—the religion of the heart—by the unhallowed contentions of Christian pastors. We know that the enemy will eagerly avail himself of the errors and weaknesses of the servants of God for the advancement of his own designs; and therefore we are the more anxious that ministers and elders should labour to evince such a spirit in our public judicatories as may adorn, and not disgrace the doctrine of God our Saviour. Were Presbyteries and Synods in all cases conducted with the gravity and single-mindedness becoming these deliberative bodies, or even with ordinary decorum, we should find little difficulty in defending them against the petty objections by which they are sometimes assailed. In what way this object may be effected, it is difficult to suggest. We are of opinion, that if it were made a matter of special prayer in congregations and families, at least as far as ministers and people are impressed with its importance, something might be done towards preserving a proper spirit in the public courts of Presbyterianism. The Secession Synod has found increased attention to religious exercises during the period of its sittings, to be beneficial to the discharge of its constituted functions; and we feel that we are doing no more than justice to our brethren, when we encourage them to persevere in the peaceful and dignified course which they have hitherto pursued.

We proceed now to notice what we hold to be radically defective in the operations of all Presbyteries and Synods; and we bring it as a serious charge against them all, that they are grievously inattentive to the interests of vital religion. Far be it from us to interfere with the very salutary discipline which our brethren apply to delinquents. This is a part of ecclesiastical proceeding which has been necessary in every age of the

Church, and which, in all probability, will be necessary as long as the Church is in the world. But is it not obvious, that by giving our church courts more of a decidedly religious character, we should, under the divine blessing, be instrumental in preventing much of the delinquency that originates some of our most painful deliberations? A visit to the West of Ireland some years since, brought us acquainted with a plan which a number of evangelical ministers of the Episcopal Church adopted with good effect. Certain periods were appointed by them to assemble at each other's houses, for the express purpose of consulting respecting the spiritual interests of their people—of striking out plans of usefulness suitable to their several districts—and of visiting the parishes of each other, in order to give a stimulus to the cause of vital godliness. Why does not our loved and boasted Presbyterianism maintain something of this kind? How multitudinous and complicated are the difficulties with which a faithful minister of the word of God has to contend in the management of his own congregation. He must faithfully apply the doctrines of the glorious Gospel to countless variety of feeling, and character, and attainment in his public ministrations. To all he is bound to speak a word in season. How is this to be effected? Is it not desirable that the minister—is it not essential that the young minister should have access to the experience of his brethren; and for this purpose, should we not at Presbytery or Synod have some friendly confidential conversation about the difficulties attending our preaching, and the practical plans which have been found most efficient for the removal of these difficulties? It may be said that there are books which treat wisely and well all such topics. We know that there are, but we have yet to learn that in promoting this object, a dead book is equal to a living conversation. Besides, after all the information which can be gathered from books, we apprehend that the minister who pants to be faithful and successful in the work of the Lord, will be the more eager for that kind of brotherly communication on the subject which we believe to be so valuable.

Another class of ministerial difficulties arises out of the examination of candidates for the communion of the Church. These are common to the eldership with the minister; but on *his* shoulders they mainly press. We have often felt difficulty and hesitation on this point, and we have known others to express the same feeling; and yet neither Presbyteries nor Synods have any arrangements providing for a friendly consultation about the matter. Many other sources of embarrassment

might be enumerated. Let the above suffice for calling attention to the subject as one deeply interesting to the internal well-being of the Church of Christ. And now we ask, why should not some provision be made, at least for affording to those who would count it a privilege, an opportunity of conversing with their fathers and brethren on subjects which enter into the very marrow of religion? Synods and Presbyteries, it may be objected, have an overflow of business without turning upon them another mighty current. But these bodies show that they can hold adjourned meetings—or they can appoint committees—or they can encourage ministers and elders to enter upon such a course, by pointing out a wise mode of gaining the object. Let them testify that they value the interests of vital religion, by doing something which may directly bear on the religious knowledge and piety of Christian congregations. We hold such bodies as Presbyteries and Synods to be inexcusable in the neglect with which they have treated the religious well-being of young ministers as well as of the people at large; and we call on them to take measures by which ministers may enjoy facilities for communicating with each other respecting their peculiar difficulties and plans of Christian operation.

The Presbyterian Secession Synod is evincing a very laudable zeal for promoting the religious education of candidates for the Holy Ministry; we trust that they will follow up their vigorous endeavours in this department by providing for the instruction and encouragement of young men, after they have entered on the labours of the Holy Ministry.

WICLIF.

## MR. CARSON ON THE TEACHING OF THE SPIRIT.

[From Mr. Carson's recent work on Biblical interpretation, in which he exposes, with the hand of a master, the false principles of Ernesti and his annotator Ammon, we take the liberty of laying before our readers the following admirable extract respecting the teaching of the Holy Spirit.—EDIT.]

THE absolute necessity of the teaching of the Holy Spirit in order to illuminate the mind in the knowledge of the Scriptures, is a fact as clearly asserted by the word of God, as is

any other doctrine of revelation. Ernesti himself, while he admits the fact, does not exhibit it among the qualifications of his accomplished interpreter. This essential defect, which was overlooked by the American Editor, is properly supplied by Dr. Henderson, in his edition of Mr. Stuart's translation. Indeed, Dr. Henderson's part of the work is the only thing in it that boldly and decidedly brings into view this great and important fact. This fact indeed has nothing to do with principles of interpretation, and in the science of the subject it is not concerned. But Ernesti's work is not properly on the science of interpretation. It is not a book of principles, as it is generally considered, but of observations and directions for producing an accomplished interpreter. As such, it should have prominently brought forward the necessity of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. All other qualifications are insufficient without this. That which should stand, where Dr. Henderson places it, at the head of all qualifications, should not be omitted with a single accidental recognition. Men without the knowledge of God have in some things been serviceable in the explanation of Scripture, but the very best of them are insufficient guides.

This, however, does not imply any peculiar difficulty in Scripture, and therefore is not to be placed among the evidences of the difficulty of interpreting Scripture. The teaching of the Holy Spirit is necessary, not from the peculiar difficulty of Scripture language, nor from the incomprehensibility of its doctrines, but from the natural blindness of the human mind, with respect to spiritual things, and its rooted aversion to the wisdom of God displayed in the plan of salvation. In fact, it is the things that are most clearly revealed, that are most misunderstood. Some writers, while they have most grossly perverted the plainest language, with respect to the Gospel and its distinguishing features, have successfully explained some of the most perplexing difficulties of phraseology, with respect to things in which the Gospel is not immediately concerned. This fact is an obvious one, and it is one most important.

Nor is it to be understood that the teaching of the Spirit communicates any meaning that is not contained in the words. The Holy Spirit teaches only what in words is revealed in the Scriptures; and only through the words. It is necessary for every Christian to have clear and precise notions on this subject; for the teaching of the Holy Spirit is capable of being misrepresented and most dangerously perverted by enthusiasm. It has been so perverted, to the disgrace of Christianity, and to

the beguiling of unstable souls. That tide of fanaticism that has lately set in upon Britain, and which threatens to roll over the world, has been raised by false views of the teaching of the Holy Spirit. This deludes many; but still more are furnished with a plausible pretence to renounce the doctrine of the Spirit's teaching, or to keep it out of view as a dangerous doctrine. But the success of the forgery only shows the value of the original, and he is not wise who will not look to God as a guide because some fanatics choose to go astray under the false pretence of that guidance. Let us avoid errors on the right, and errors on the left. There is no safety but in implicitly following the Word. It is in this only that we are encouraged to expect the enlightening and constant guidance of the glorious Spirit of the truth. The Scriptures are the word of God, and he honours them in his teaching, by employing them to enlighten the mind of the sinner, and carry on the education and instruction of the believer. He teaches nothing without them. To enlighten the mind of the sinner by the knowledge of Christ, or to instruct the Christian in the truths and duties of Christianity, without or beyond the Scriptures, would represent the Scriptures as unnecessary or deficient. Whoever pretends to learn from God any thing as to the truths or duties of Christianity, but through his word, has a spirit of fanaticism. This peculiarity in the teaching of the Spirit through the word of the Spirit, is the great safeguard which we have against the delusion of Satan, and the dreams of a crazy imagination. The spirit of wickedness, we are assured, has access to the human mind, and teaches his doctrine to men. How then shall we know the difference between the teaching of the Holy Spirit, and the suggestions of the wicked one? By this infallible criterion. The Spirit of God teaches only what is contained in the Scriptures, and this he always teaches through the means of the Scriptures. If any thing is taught contrary to them, or in addition to them, or without their instrumentality, it is to be ascribed to the spirit of darkness, or to our own blinded minds.

Nor, though all Christians are taught by the Spirit, does it follow that they are taught the true meaning of every passage of the word of God. Indeed the doctrine of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, properly understood, affords no evidence that they are correct in their explanation of any passage whatever. The truth of their explanation must rest on the arguments by which they support it, and not on the pretensions to divine teaching. The explanations of an apostle we are to receive

implicitly, even though we should not see the legitimacy of the conclusion from the premises; but the explanation of every uninspired man must be received no farther than it is seen to be the necessary result of the words of inspiration. That he is taught the true meaning, in every instance, by the Spirit, does not follow from his being a Christian, but must be known by the reasons assigned for his interpretation. Implicit acquiescence in the explanations of Scripture by any uninspired man, is a disgrace to human understanding, and an insult to God. And what we refuse to others, we should not give to ourselves. We should not be dupes to ourselves more than to others. Our own explanations we should bring to the same rigorous test, that we may not allow ourselves to be ensnared by our own sophistry. *That* should not be received as a true explanation, which cannot recommend itself independently of the fancy of its author. And though we may have good reason to think that we have in some things been taught by the Spirit, yet in every instance our conclusion must rest upon the evidence which is presented to our mind. No man has a right to say, as some are in the habit of saying, the Spirit tells me that such or such is the meaning of such a passage. How is he assured that it is the Holy Spirit, and that it is not a spirit of delusion, except from the evidence that the interpretation is the legitimate meaning of the words? The lying spirits spake of old through the false prophets, with all the usual formalities of the true prophets of God.

All Christians are taught the truth that saves the soul, but in entire consistency with this, they may be ignorant of any thing else. Accordingly errors abound among Christians, and there is every variety of difference among them, that is consistent with knowing the way of salvation. Even on the very nature of the Gospel, all Christians are far from being equally taught by the Spirit. There are some who hold it with a great mixture of human wisdom, yet so as to be made spiritually alive by it; and, in a measure, to obey Christ. From this there is every degree in the scale of advancement, till the justice of God, as unfolded in Christ, is relied on with as great confidence as his mercy.

At first sight it appears strange, that if all Christians are taught by the same Spirit, there should be any difference among them. Can this great Teacher lead his people to opposite conclusions?—But a proper view of the subject will entirely remove the difficulty. Christians are all taught the same thing by the Spirit, so far as they are taught by him. But as

the Spirit does not teach them all to the same extent, there is room for many differences. All his people are not in the same class. There are babes, young men, and fathers. God is sovereign in this, as in every thing else. He gives his gifts as he pleases ; to some much, to some comparatively little. This would not be worthy of approbation in earthly fathers.

Nor is the variety in the extent of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, a more remarkable instance of sovereignty, than the regulation of that variety. We naturally expect that Christians of the greatest natural powers and acquirements, will be the persons most distinguished by the teaching of the Spirit. But it is often far otherwise. Not only are the things of God generally hidden from the wise and prudent, but even when such are enlightened by the Word and Spirit of God, they are often less fully instructed in the truth, than the weak things of this world. How many learned Christians have spent all their lives in Scripture criticism, yet have never advanced above the lower forms in the school of Christ ! How many poor, weak-minded, illiterate men, have been distinguished for depth and accuracy of views of Divine Truth ! One of the mightiest intellects that ever lodged in the breast of man, was possessed by Dr. Samuel Johnson, yet though he died as a Christian, his attainments in the school of Christ, were among the lowest of all disciples. Had the Spirit of God and Divine teaching been given according to the wisdom of men, this giant of genius and literature, would have as far excelled other Christians in the knowledge of Divine things, as he did all others in intellect and learning.

From what has been observed it follows, that the doctrine of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, is no warrant for implicit submission to the interpretations of Scripture by the best of men. A person may be taught by the Spirit to understand one passage, who is not taught to understand another.

The duty of prayer, that our eyes may be opened to understand the Scriptures, is very properly brought forward by Dr. Henderson, supplying the deficiency both of Ernesti and his American editor. Too much cannot be said to urge this on the attention of Christians. Without it no progress can be expected in the knowledge of the Word of God. But even this is not, as to any particular passage, to be received as evidence that we have attained the true interpretation. We have reason to believe, that God will hear our prayer ; but the only evidence that he has done so, is, that we now have light, when before we were in darkness ; that we now perceive the meaning,

which before lay hid from us. A pupil who meets with a difficulty in his author, applies to his teacher for assistance ; he then perceives the meaning, and holds it now independently of the mere authority of his instructor. The astronomer tells us when we shall see a comet. The evidence that we understand him, is that we have discerned it in the very place to which we were directed to look. That the comet was there at such a time, we now believe, not merely on the authority of the astronomer, but on the testimony of our own eyes. The astronomer himself could not now convince us that we did not see it. Let us then sit at the feet of Jesus for illumination by his Holy Spirit ; but let us rest the truth of our views of Scripture, not on our conviction of being Divinely taught, but on the reasons on which our interpretations rest. Self-sufficiency and fanaticism are both to be avoided. The doctrine of the necessity of the teaching of the Holy Spirit, ought never to be kept in the back-ground. But it ought to be held only as it is exhibited in Scripture. It is an offence and a matter of ridicule to the wise men of this world, but it is the glory of the school of Christ. While the mention of it is studiously avoided by Christians, or while it is mentioned with coldness and jealousy, no advancement in the knowledge of Divine things can be generally expected. Some modern commentaries, even of professedly orthodox writers, are utterly without unction. They are ashamed of the heavenly energy of spirit manifested by the Fathers of the Reformation.

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## OBSTACLES TO THE CONVERSION OF CHILDREN.

THE Rev. H. G. Ludlow is preaching, in his church in Spring-street, a course of sermons on the salvation of children. The discourse last Sabbath morning, was on the "obstacles in the way of the conversion of children." The following is an abstract of the principal matters, partly in the language of the preacher :—

TEXT—"And he laid *his* hands on them, and departed thence."—Matt. xix. 15.

1. One of the things by which we seem to *forbid* little children to come to Christ is "the unbelief of the church in regard to the accountability of little children, and the possibility of their conversion." How few, even of Christian parents, seem to entertain the idea, with any degree of seriousness, that

their little children are accountable to God for their actions. They hold them accountable to *themselves*, but not to God. This is seen when their little children are removed by death. They seem to take it for granted, that their departed children are happy, because they were innocent, and had never committed sin enough to make it just in God to punish them.

People manifest very little care about the souls of children at an early age. How many treat them as play things, rather than human beings, and fill their minds with stories of a trifling nature, and thus sow the seeds of death. They flatter their vanity, foster their pride, gratify their passions, confirm them in selfishness, and cherish their aversion to God and serious things; because they do not think such little ones are susceptible of the knowledge and love of God. Death, however, works miracles, and the child which, when living, was regarded as incapable of conversion, now shines an angel in the realms of day.

## 2. The inconsistency of parents.

Oh, how hard it is for us, who love our ease and are averse to self-denial—how hard it is to maintain that hourly watchfulness over ourselves, which will enable us to present to these little ones the example of piety which the Gospel inculcates, and which it would be safe for them to imitate. *One* word, one action, in which the parent discovers levity, anger, pride, revenge, worldliness, or any other unholy temper, may counteract all the instructions of many a day.

## 3. Bad family government; either entire neglect of it, or governing children in a way opposed to the rules drawn in the Scriptures.

Parents are commanded to bring up their children in the nurture and admonition of the Lord. Of course there must be general principles—the outline of a form of government, laid down in the Bible. Compliance with these heavenly directions will, IN ALL CASES, inevitably *insure* the salvation of the children of those who obey God—the promise of Him who has said, “Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it,” insures this. Without family government, parents have no right to expect the salvation of their children, no matter how much they pray. How anxious ought every parent to be, that God may say of him, as he did of Abraham, “I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord, to do justice and judgment, that the Lord may bring upon Abraham that which he hath

spoken of him." For the salvation of the child, God has delegated to parents a power over it, inferior only to his own. He has connected to his care the immortal at an age when a sense of its helplessness and its dependence, naturally leads it to submit to parental authority, and fear parental displeasure. Thus has God delegated something of his own prerogative to parents; and I do not believe it is ever ineffectual, until the parent, pursuing some other plan for the education of his children, than that which Infinite Wisdom has devised, relinquishes his claims, and abdicates the throne. Where is the child who has felt the influence of a wisely administered parental government, and does not, if that father be yet alive, feel the obligation to obey and honour him, although he may long since have left his home?

But the defect in family government to which I particularly allude, consists, in not exercising a salutary restraint over them, as well by physical power as moral. Nothing is more common at this day, than to hear parents saying that they have no confidence at all in the rod. They believe the best way to govern families is by reason—by argument. And when this is the case, nothing is more common than to see children long before they have reached 15 years of age absolutely ungovernable, and throwing off the restraint of parental authority. Yes, many long ere this age, are beyond the reach of the parental arm. I have seen it, and with grief and astonishment, even among those who have dedicated their children to God in baptism, and vowed unto the Lord, to educate them according to his word. Their children grow up without control or correction, until long indulgence has strengthened their tempers into full maturity, and now they are afraid to undertake to govern them.

Let me tell you my people, that the same God who has commanded you to instruct, has also commanded you to chastise your children. Prov. xiii. 24, "He that spareth the rod hateth his son, but he that loveth him chasteneth him betimes;" xiv. 8, "Chasten thy son *while there is hope*, and let not thy soul spare for his crying;" xxii. 15, "Foolishness is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of correction shall drive it far from him;" xxiii. 13, 14, "Withhold not correction from the child; thou shalt beat him with a rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell;" xxix. 15, "The rod and reproof give wisdom, but a child left to himself bringeth his mother to shame."

How can a parent dare to refuse administering chastisement to a refractory child? I know it is painful, but God knew it

too, when he enjoined the duty. And are you kinder than God? Are you so fearful of inflicting pain, which endures for a few moments only, and do you not wish to save his soul from an eternal hell?

What would you think of our state government, if it should merely advise all our citizens to be honest, and never build a prison or inflict a penalty? How much like such an administration is that of many of our domestic circles. Let us make some inquiries of these parents.

Q. Where are your children that have been dedicated to God, and whom you have solemnly vowed to rear for his service?

A. In the street among the profane and ungodly.

Q. But where are they now at family prayers?

A. In bed or at play. They are not willing to attend.

Q. But where are they on the Lord's day?

A. I tried to get them to go with me to church, but they preferred staying at home, or going to some other place of worship. I know not where.

And is this so? Is it possible that *Christian* parents give such answers? Permit me then to put some further questions. Have you, from their early infancy, been in the uninterrupted habit of controlling your children? Have you, with a firm and steady hand, administered correction as well as instruction? Have you made them submit to power, when advice would not answer? Have you kept them from all external influence of a vicious association? What do you answer?

A. No. I took a different course. My plan was to reason with them, and leave them to take their own course. When they would not submit, I left them, with the hope that they would do better as they grew in years. And having a large family, I was glad enough to get rid of the trouble and the noise, and so I left them to seek their companions beyond the domestic circle. Do not think, however, that I did not pray for them. By no means; often have I wet my pillow with my tears, when I thought of their wickedness, and feared their damnation. Now they are so large they are beyond my reach.

Alas! alas! how many parents would make this answer; and their rebellious, disobedient, unconverted children, are witnesses to the truth of it. Thus does a mistake in early discipline—a neglect to obey the commands of God, fill our churches with many an Eli, and many an Hophni and Phineas.

To all this I know it may be said, that very often the best of parents have the worst of children; and that these children

are found among those in whose education the greatest care has been taken. To this I have two answers:—

1. That God may have seen such defects in these parents as to render it inconsistent to bless them. And that parents may have been guilty of sin in their families, which none but their children saw; so that even the best of them may have done enough to counteract their own instruction.

2. I say, that as a general rule, those parents are the most blessed in their children's conversion, who do bring them up according to God's law, although very imperfectly. You know that it is a common saying, that ministers' children are worse than others. The following table will show the falseness of the assertion:—

"A Mr. Grosvenor, General Agent of the Connecticut Sunday-school Union, has published the results of a novel inquiry he has made, with a view to ascertain the truth or falsity of the very common remarks, to the disadvantage of ministers' and deacons' families. These results are very grateful, and give the whole matter an entirely new aspect.

"In the families of 35 ministers there are 141 children, fifteen years old and upwards. Of these 89 are professors of religion—15 are hopefully pious, but have not made a profession—and 19 are ministers, or preparing for the ministry. Four sons are intemperate—the mother of one of them is not a pious woman. The remaining 33 sustain a good moral character.

"In the families of 172 deacons, there are 796 children, fifteen years old and upwards, of whom 450 are professors of religion—46 hopefully pious, but have not made a profession—and 17 ministers. Sixteen are intemperate—three of these were excommunicated from the church for this crime. The *fathers* of three of them use strong drink, and the fathers of two others are strongly opposed to *temperance societies*. The *mother* of one was excommunicated for this sin. The remaining 284, with very few exceptions, are respectable, useful citizens.

"In the families of 42 ministers, there are 99 children between 5 and 15 years of age—of whom 7 are professors and 2 are hopefully pious, but not professors.

"In the families of 85 deacons, are 199 between the ages 5 and 15, of whom 17 are professors, and 17 are pious, but not professors.

"In view of these facts, will any one still maintain that this proverb is true in its general application to the families of

ministers and deacons? If so, let him select in the several towns in this state 207 families, embracing 937 children over 15 years of age, of whom 539 are professors of religion—61 pious and not professors, and 36 ministers, and among whom there are but 20 who are intemperate. But when he has done this his point is not proved, for he must show that these 937 are *more* respectable, *more* moral, and *more* religious than the same number among the children of ministers and deacons."

### EXTRACT FROM CHARNOCK'S DISCOURSE OF "MERCY RECEIVED."

I. Let us notice some reasons why these mercies are to be remembered.

1. They are the mercies of God. They are dispensed out of the treasury of his goodness, wrought by the art of his wisdom, effected by the arm of his power: Christ evidenced this by praying to his Father for the mercies he wanted, by blessing Him as the fountain of any mercy received. The great dominion Christ hath, is from God; it is first, "Ask of me," Psa. ii. 8: yea, though wrought by means. The woman doth touch the hem of Christ's garment, but the healing virtue springs from Christ. Men may spread their nets, toil and labour nights, and days, and years, and catch nothing, unless Christ sends the fish into the net, Luke v. 5, 6. "Our works are in the hands of God," Eccles. ix. 1. Though our works, yet in God's hand, he pours forth his blessing, he gives success.

The first link of the chain of mercy is in God's hand. If we do not then remember them, and Him in them, we deny His providence and goodness, and pay that to the servant which is due to the Lord. "We should remember his love more than wine," Cant. i. 4. His love in mercies more than the choicest delights of earth. No gift so small, but is a messenger from the great God, and hath the badge of his name upon it.

2. Mercies purchased by Christ. Mercies dear bought by the best blood that ever was in the world. The print of Christ's nails are upon every one of his blessings, the least as well as the greatest. "Ye are not your own, ye are bought with a price," 1 Cor. vi. 19, 20. You and your bodies, and the preservation of your bodies, you and what you have, you and your mercies, and your comforts, are all purchased by another, and freely conferred upon you; they are therefore worthy of remembrance.

3. Mercies beneficial to us. We should certainly remember those things whereof we carry the sensible marks upon us.

II. Let us inquire how we should remember these mercies.

1. Admiringly and thankfully. We should observe God's mercies, not only as works but as wonders. "I will remember the works of the Lord, surely I will remember thy wonders of old," Psa. lxxvii. 11, to admire them and the Author. Old antedated mercies, as well as fresh, should fill us with new astonishments; not a speculative but an elevating remembrance, to cry out with raised spirits, How great God is! "Who is so great a God as our God!" ver. 13. Paul never looked back upon God's mercies in his conversion without a new admiration: "I thank Jesus Christ our Lord who hath enabled me," 1 Tim. i. 12. This was not enough, it was a peg too low for so great a mercy, till he rises up into a high doxology, ver. 17, "Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honour and glory for ever and ever, Amen." What a heaven sparkles here in Paul's language, so like that of glory! Shall we not have thankful frames in the remembrance of them, when we should stand ready with praise to meet every mercy in its first motion: "Praise waiteth for thee, O God, in Sion," Psa. lxv. 1. Mercy in its first step should not find us a minute without a thankful frame. As God waits for an opportunity to be gracious, we should wait with praise in our mouths to be thankful to him; a volley of praise should stand ready to meet a shower of mercy. They did not think amiss, that asserted a main part of religion to consist in admiration; this had been the work in innocence. Many other duties have been introduced by a fallen state, this is an entrance into a state of innocence by reassuming the duty of that state, an entrance into the state of heaven by beginning the work of it; this is the eternal religion. Not a bullock nor a goat was to be killed for a man's own table in the wilderness, but they were to bring it to the door of the tabernacle, and offer an offering to the Lord, if not, they were accounted murderers, Lev. xvii. 3, 4. God must be acknowledged in all.

2. Affectionately. What a deep print of love did the kindness of Christ stamp upon many whose diseases he cured upon the earth! We then rightly remember them, when they raise choice affections to God in us. It was God's promise: "Yet I am the Lord thy God from the land of Egypt, and thou shalt know no god but me," Hos. xiii. 4: love no god, acknowledge no god but me, because I have brought you out of the land of Egypt, and maintained you by a constant succession

of merciful streams of benefits. We begin to love God by the knowledge faith gives us of him ; but the experience of his mercy renders him more amiable, and the consideration of it should render our love more lively. Our very common mercies should not be thought of without affection, much less our spiritual mercies. The deliverance of our bodies from death deserves a return of love ; much more the redemption of our souls. Remember these mercies warmly, so as to kindle a flame of love. That is not properly remembered, which works not a suitable impression in the review of it ; he rather forgets his sin who remembers it without a disaffection to it ; and he his mercies who thinks of them without being raised in affection to God by them.

3. Obediently and fruitfully. David, upon the remembrance of the Divine mercy, would walk before God in the land of the living. Mercies are given to encourage us in His service, and should be therefore remembered to that end. Rain descends upon the earth, not that it might be more barren, but more fertile. We are but stewards, the mercies we enjoy are not our own, and therefore to be improved for our Master's service. Great mercies should engage to great obedience. God begins the decalogue with a memorial of his mercy in bringing the Israelites out of Egypt : "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt," Exod. xx. 2. How affectionately doth the Psalmist own his relation to God as his servant, when he considered how God had loosed his bonds ! "O Lord, truly I am thy servant, I am thy servant, thou hast loosed my bonds," Psa. cxvi. 16 ; the remembrance of thy mercy shall make me know no relation but that of a servant to thee. When we remember what wages we have from God, we must withal remember that we owe more service, and more liveliness in service to him. Duty is but the ingenuous consequence of mercy. It is irrational to encourage ourselves in our way to hell by a remembrance of heaven ; to foster a liberty in sin by a consideration of God's bounty. When we remember that all we have or are is the gift of God's liberality, we should think ourselves obliged to honour him with all that we have, for he is to have honour from all his gifts. It is a sign we aimed at God's glory in the begging of mercy, when we also aim at God's glory in the enjoying it. It is a sign love breathed the remembrance of a mercy into our hearts, when at the same time it breathes a resolution into us to improve it. It is not our tongues, but our lives must praise him ; mercies are not given to one member, but the whole man. Thanks-

giving without obedience is but flattery ; it is but “ Hail, Master !” while we crown him with thorns.

4. Humbly. The remembrance of free mercies should not be attended with a forgetfulness of our own sinfulness ; nor increase our pride, but our humiliation. When Peter saw so great a stock of fish driven into the net, he had the lowest thoughts of himself, Luke v. 8. He fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “ I am a sinful man, O Lord.” What a gracious frame is that, when the remembrance of mercy brings us upon our knees to a humble confession of sin ! Kindness makes wicked men more proud, and good men more broken. We are usually as lead, melted in the fire of affliction, and hardened in the fresh air of prosperity, and grow inactive ; but let it be otherwise.

5. In the circumstances. As circumstances adorn our actions, so they beautify God’s mercies, the manner, the time, &c. Every line in mercy owns God as the author, as well as the whole mass. Mercy beaten to pieces as spice, will yield a sweeter scent than in the lump. Remember what misery preceded the mercy ; as it made the mercy the sweeter, so it will make the remembrance of it more savoury : “ I will give her her vineyards from thence,” that is, from the wilderness ; “ then shall she sing as in the day of her youth,” Hos. ii. 15. “ Thy heart shall meditate terror,” Isa. xxxiii. 18. Thou shalt consider what thy troubles were, and what the frame of thy heart was, and what thy vows and resolutions were in thy distress. It is good to call to mind what desires, what fervency in prayer there was before the mercy came, and upon the remembrance of the mercy to act the same fervour over again.

Use 1. Take heed of forgetting mercies received. Keep a catalogue of mercies to quicken your love, wind up your thankfulness, and encourage your faith. We can remember ourselves when we pray for mercy, and forget God when we receive it, and the mercy itself not long after. We cannot profit by mercies, unless we thankfully remember them ; direct rays convey not so much warmth without reflecting back upon the sun. God remembers the kindness of our youth to him, Jer. ii. 2. Why should not we remember the tenderness of his grace to us ? Great comforts must be especially remembered ; they come but seldom ; Paul had but one special rapture in fourteen years. Let every new mercy call the old to mind. The mercy of the Lamb put them in mind of his mercy to Moses, and the Israelites, Rev. xv. 3. “ Bless the Lord from the fountain of Israel,” Psa. lxviii. 26 ; that is, from the very first mercy. Remember also the impressions God makes upon

your souls under the first influence of your mercies. Keep them alive and fresh, it is a way to procure more from God, when he beholds such valuations of them.

Use 2. Make use of former mercies to encourage your trust for the future. Was it God's end in giving us mercies to encourage our jealousies of his faithfulness, or our hopes of his goodness? It is fit we should trust God upon his bare word, much more upon a trial of him. If we can say, God hath delivered, and therefore he will deliver, why may we not with as good reason say, We have trusted God, and will trust him still? We have not only heard how faithful and good he is, but we have also seen, known it, found him to be so.

Whenever we find our souls dejected, let us remember God's dealing with us, and, with the Psalmist check them : " Why art thou cast down, O my soul?" Psa. xlii. 11. What, O my soul, that hadst had so many rich mercies out of the store-house of God's free grace and favour, why art thou disquieted within me? " hope thou in God, for I will yet praise him who is the health of my countenance, and my God."

## REVIEW OF ASHE'S NOTES ON THE REVELATION.

*The Book of Revelation, with Compendious Notes,* By the Rev. ISAAC ASHE, A.B. Dublin, Curry. 1835.

WHAT treasures of wisdom are hidden in the Bible! These, like the mines of the earth, must be wrought; but they are worth the working. Dig them out and put them in circulation; they are the riches of the world.

What varied powers lie folded in the soul of man? To these varied powers, He who made us and who knows our frame, has addressed his word. The Scriptures are accordingly characterised by an exquisite adaptation to the nature and exercise of the human faculties. We have intellect and reason; accordingly truths the most sublime, and reasonings the most profound, abound in the Scriptures. Man has an imitative principle; to lay hold of this and to form this, the examples of the Scriptures are recorded. We have principles of taste and imagination; to captivate these, we have the eloquence and song of bard and prophet. Man is a prospective being; we are destined to live beyond the present, and we possess the desire and the faculty of anticipating futurity. This prospec-

tive propensity, the wisdom of God has consulted in the Scriptures. Promise and prophecy accordingly form an important part of the great things which the Spirit of God has caused to be written to us in his Word. The testimony of Jesus is the Spirit of prophecy. We have a sure word of prophecy, to which we do well to take heed, as to a light shining in a dark place.

The chronology, history, geography, poetry, criticism, ethics, and theology of the Bible, have each of them called forth in their elucidation the utmost efforts of learning and genius. Nor has prophecy been left unexplored. The fathers of the Reformation truly read the apocalyptic marks and doom of Babylon, and came out of her and were separate. The amazing fulfilment of prophecy in the events of the French Revolution—the overthrow of the antiquated despotisms of Continental Europe—the obvious pouring out of Divine judgment on the ancient seats of Papal superstition and persecution—the decline of the Turkish empire, with a variety of other occurrences—have powerfully called the minds of multitudes, in later days, to the study of the Book of Revelation. The pulpit has spoken; the press has not kept back; numbers have read and thought: the result is, the mind of the church has been awakened to a more extensive and eager inquiry into unfulfilled prophecy, than perhaps at any former period. The Book of Revelation in particular has been made the frequent subject of patient and laborious investigation.

The result of such inquiries many may judge far from being so satisfactory, in point of harmony and success, as our sanguine wishes would have led us to desire. A very little consideration, however, will prepare our minds for expecting difficulties, uncertainty, and diversities of interpretation, on several parts of this mystic book. The very structure of the Revelation consists chiefly of symbol and allegory, and a large portion of it is occupied with unfulfilled prophecy. The extravagancies of modern Millenarianism have driven many to doubt the wisdom or the sanity of those who address themselves to the exposition of the Revelation; saying in effect, with Dr. South in his sermons, that “The Revelation either makes a man mad or finds him so.”

Many it is true have perpetrated great extravagancies on the Revelation, just as men have done on all other subjects which have excited the effervescence of ill-balanced minds. Great diversities, it is admitted, exist with regard to the interpretation of the symbols and the predictions of the Revelation; many

of the events there foretold yet lie hid in the womb of futurity. But are these valid reasons to hinder us from the study of this book? The extravagance of others, instead of disgusting us against action, should teach us sobriety and caution. What is the argument deduced from difficulties? Not to drive us to despair, but to habituate and harden us to perseverance. And what though there be great diversities of opinion and interpretation? These diversities should convince us, not that men shall never be successful and harmonious in their inquiries eventually, but only that a complete, successful, and satisfactory commentary on the Revelation has not yet been furnished, nor is likely to be furnished speedily; and such a commentary can be furnished ultimately, only in consequence of a great multitude of attempts being made, and carried forward perseveringly in succession, until the last prophecy shall have received its interpretation from the event. "The day shall declare it." The Spirit will guide into all truth; and until the day of full disclosure arrive, multitudes of commentaries must flourish and must fade. Multitudes, like the successive generation of leaves on trees, must come forth and perish like their predecessors. Multitudes of interpretations must

" ——Like leaves of trees be found,  
Now green in youth, now withering on the ground ;  
A new race the following spring supplies,  
They fall successive and successive rise."

Commentators, however, have this consolation to sustain them,—each is adding something to the general stock. Each is constituting his share to supply that in which a vast number of labourers are employed by the Supreme Wisdom, but the agency and the glory of supplying the whole of which, he denies to any individual mind. One strikes out some new light of discovery. Another illustrates with greater clearness than his predecessors. A third is peculiarly happy in bringing the facts of history to bear on prophetic symbols. A fourth excels in collecting, arranging, and condensing the scattered and accumulating materials of exposition. And though the unfulfilled prophecy of Revelation be necessarily dark, until futurity disclose it, yet much of that book has not only been really fulfilled, but truly expounded. To crown all, from this wonderful and mystic book, no voice of fear sounds forth, as from the Pagan oracles of old, forbidding an approach; on the contrary, the voice of the Spirit of Wisdom is heard encouraging and inviting, "Blessed is he that readeth and they that hear

the words of this prophecy, and keep the things that are written therein."

Entertaining such sentiments, we cannot but welcome Mr. Ashe as a labourer into the field of prophecy, and hail his "Notes" as an acceptable contribution towards an exposition of the Revelation. Mr. Ashe professes to adhere to that system of interpretation most generally received in the church. He opposes particularly the dogmatism and extravagance of the modern Millenarian school. Mr. Ashe's plan of merely furnishing "Notes," precludes continuous and lengthened discussion; so that the author has not space to display, in full effect, the skill of his reasoning or the attractions of his eloquence; but he certainly brings before us a vast body of information, interpretative and historical; and that, too, in small compass, and with great brevity and neatness of expression; while the tone of interpretation is one of exemplary modesty and caution.

We submit the following specimens of Mr. Ashe's views of some leading symbols and predictions of the Revelation. We do not pledge ourselves to all his views; neither have we space for lengthened criticism where we differ from him. We hope that many of our readers will be induced to procure his book—examine his views and reasonings—compare them with those of other writers—and judge for themselves.

We begin with the Seals. The opening of the first Seal presents a white horse mounted by a crowned and conquering rider. This symbol, Mr. Ashe understands to represent the progress of the Gospel, both in the first and succeeding ages of Christianity, down to its final conquest of the world. The opening of the second Seal presents a red horse, with a rider bearing the insignia and the implements of death. This symbol, Mr. Ashe interprets to denote the progress of war. The black horse of the third Seal he understands to signify the progress of famine, and that, too, not only of bread, but of the word of the Lord. The sallow-coloured horse of the fourth Seal, he interprets of the progress of persecution. The martyrs of the fifth Seal, he understands to represent those who suffered for the testimony of Jesus, both under Pagan and Papal Rome. The earthquake of the sixth Seal, he interprets not only of the subversion of Paganism by Constantine, the first Christian emperor, but of the subversion of the Papal Antichrist at the end of the 1260 years, and of the final overthrow of the present constitution of things. Students of the Revelation will here observe some difference between Mr.

Ashe and other writers. Some, for example, such as Culbertson, lay it down as a principle, that the events of one Seal must terminate, before the events of another commence. This Mr. Ashe opposes. Some, such as M'Leod, judge that the events of the Seals must close, before the events of the trumpets commence. Others, such as Mede and Irving, suppose the seven Seals to refer to seven distinct eras between the commencement of Christianity and the close of time. Mr. Ashe seems to think that the Seals have a double signification, referring primarily to the events occurring during the early ages of the Christian church, and that these are to be regarded as types of succeeding events, of a similar character, on through revolving ages to the end of the world.

We proceed next to the Trumpets. The first angel sounds, and we have the vision of a shower of hail, fire, and blood. This, says Mr. Ashe, denotes the irruption of Alaric and the Goths into the Roman empire, between the year 400 and 410. The burning mountain of the second Trumpet, he explains, to signify the desolating invasion of Genseric and the Vandals, A. D. 429. The fallen star, he expounds, of the incursion of Attila and the Huns, A. D. 451. Here it must be noted, that others understand the star fallen from heaven as the symbol of an apostate ecclesiastic. Johnston says the Bishop of Constantinople; Culbertson says the Bishop of Rome. Mede, Faber, and M'Leod, understand it of the fallen emperor of Rome.

The eclipse of the fourth Trumpet, Mr. Ashe, with the generality of commentators, says, means the extinction of the Roman empire of the West, by Odeacer, king of the Heruli, A. D. 476. Culbertson contends that the eclipse denotes, not the extinction of the Roman empire, but the obscuration of Christian truth and learning during the darkness of the middle ages. The principle on which he supports this opinion is, that the eclipse of the vision is not an extinction, but merely an obscuration of the lights of heaven.

At the sounding of the fifth Trumpet, smoke and locusts are beheld issuing from the bottomless pit. The smoke is considered a symbol of the Mahometan imposture, and the locusts, of the Saracen armies. The reign of Mahometanism and of the Papacy, are both dated from the year 606; and, at the end of the 1260 years of prophecy from that period, both shall perish together. Mr. Ashe, after Newton, makes the "star which fell from heaven, and to whom was given the key of the bottomless pit," to denote Mahomet. Culbertson and

M'Leod, however, appear to us more correct, in interpreting this symbol of the monk Sergius, first a heretic, and afterwards an apostate, who composed the Alcoran for Mahomet. Mahomet, though a man of genius, was totally illiterate. Sergius wrote for him, and was, in fact, the fictitious "angel Gabriel" of the Koran. Heaven is the symbol of the visible church ; a star is the symbol of a minister ; a fallen star, therefore, is the appropriate symbol of a fallen ecclesiastic.

The Euphratean cavalry of the sixth Trumpet, Mr. Ashe understands, to denote the Turkish power. The fulfilment of this vision, he dates from A. D. 1057, when Togrul commenced his reign, and the close, he fixes A. D. 1697, when the power of the Turkish empire was broken by the battle of Zanta, since which time, it has been gradually sinking into decay.

On no part of the Revelation have commentators differed more than with regard to the interpretation of the "*Two Witnesses*," and with regard to the period of their death and resurrection. Some make them denote the Old and New Testament ; some, the Waldenses and Albigenses ; some, the Bible and common sense ; some, the small but faithful collective body of saints, who have upheld the testimony of Jesus during the reign of Antichrist ; some contend that the death and resurrection of the Witnesses have taken place ; others that these events are yet to come. Faber and Culbertson say, that the slaying and the resurrection of the Witnesses were accomplished in the first struggles and final triumphs of the Reformation. Irving thinks these were accomplished first in the suppression of the Scriptures of the two Testaments, and afterwards in the restoration of the Christian religion in France, at the period of the Revolution. Others, again, assure us, that two periods, one of gloom and another of glory, are yet before the church, as the events denoted by the death and the resurrection of the Witnesses.

Mr. Ashe interprets the two Witnesses to signify the *two-fold* testimony of the word and of the church. They are to continue in a depressed and suffering condition for 1260 years. The killing of the Witnesses, Mr. Ashe thinks, is still future. The killing of the Witnesses, he says, means the suppression of the public testimony of the Scriptures and of the church. "The beast that ascendeth out of the bottomless pit" is to kill the Witnesses. This beast, Mr. Ashe understands to denote, the "secular power of the Roman empire in its last form, which may effect its purpose, either by Popery or Infidelity."

In his interpretation of the two symbolic beasts, Mr.

Ashe says, the beast of the sea denotes the church under secular Papal Rome, and the beast of the earth denotes the church under ecclesiastical Papal Rome. The following is Mr. Ashe's method of counting the enigmatical number of the beast, which is said to be "the number of a man, and his number is 666." "It is the number of *Lateinos*, the *man* who originally founded the Roman empire, the number of the title *apostates*, (apostate), which denotes its scriptural character, and the number of the Hebrew adjective, *Romiith*, signifying the Roman church or kingdom, and of *Ludovicus*, the founder of the French monarchy, the eldest son of the apostacy, under whose successor Charlemagne, the secular Papal empire was reunited, and the Papal image of imperial authority fully developed." The letters of each of these words represent numbers which make up the mystical 666.

We shall close for the present with Mr. Ashe's interpretation of the vials. The first, which is poured on the earth, means the French Revolution, A. D. 1789, in the course of which two millions of persons lost their lives. The second vial, poured on the sea, he finds fulfilled in the naval war between Great Britain and France, from 1793 to 1815. The third vial, poured on the rivers and fountains of waters, he explains to signify the bloody and resistless campaigns of Napoleon in Piedmont, "the land of streams," from 1796 to 1800. The vial poured on the sun, "which scorched men with fire," he understands to symbolise the extinction of the empire of Napoleon, which was the cause of such vast carnage and sufferings. That sun, which shone with such glory in the fields of Marengo and Austerlitz, sunk in disaster and shame in the field of Waterloo. The fifth vial, he says, is to be understood of the revival of Papal tyranny in the reconstruction of the Papal monarchies of France, Italy, Spain, and Portugal, after the fall of Buonaparte. The sixth vial, which dries up the waters of the great river, Euphrates, "that the way of the kings of the East might be prepared," has its fulfilment in the gradual decay of the Turkish empire, and terminates with the extinction of Mahometan and Papal power at the end of the 1260 years. The Turkish power has of late years been wasting away from a variety of causes—political weakness, pestilence, earthquakes, conflagrations, inundations, war and loss of territory. The drying up of the Euphrates, is preparing "the way of the kings of the East"—the restoration of Israel to their own land. "The power of the Ottoman Porte," says Mr. Ashe, "is the great barrier in the way of the return of Israel

to Palestine. Were that removed, there would be every facility for their restoration. The prophet Isaiah also foretells that the passage of the *remnant from the East* will correspond with that out of Egypt, by a figurative drying up of the Eastern river, as Israel passed into Canaan, by a literal drying up of the Red Sea. Isa. xi. 15. The way appears to be *preparing*, in a remarkable manner, by the late occurrences in the Ottoman empire. When the French took Algiers in 1829, they established perfect religious freedom for the numerous Jews in that territory, who are now governed by rulers of their own choice and of their own nation; and, in 1832, Ibrahim Pacha, who holds Judea in possession, removed by a firman, addressed to the magistrates of Jerusalem, every restriction upon their free entrance into the holy city."

Mr. Ashe cannot reasonably be offended with us, who are Presbyterians, if in justice to ourselves and in honesty to those to whom we recommend his work, we express our dissent from his views on the point of Episcopal church government. On the expression, "*Angel of the church of Ephesus*," chap. i. ver. 1, he has this note—"With respect to the office of the angel, there are three opinions. 1. That he was a minister over only one congregation. 2. That the term *angel* is used to signify the whole presbytery. 3. That he was the supreme Bishop or elder in a church consisting of several congregations and ministers, which certainly appears to be the true one. The form of church government, which we find here alluded to, is the most perfect model that occurs in the New Testament; and, as it is the last recorded, we may reasonably conclude, that it was established by the apostles in every completely organized church, and was designed to be of perpetual standing." Such is Mr. Ashe's argument for Episcopacy. Now, if Episcopacy cannot be established from the term, "*angel of the church*," which is to be found only in the Book of Revelation, it cannot be established from any other part of the New Testament. There is not a trace of it to be found in the Acts or in the Epistles; and a figurative or symbolic term occurring in the Revelation, a book consisting chiefly of the language of symbol or figure, is too slender a foundation on which to build a theory of church government. What is the exact meaning, the precise office of *angel* of the church? Our Lord or his apostles ordained no such office as *distinct* from that of elder or Bishop. If they did, let the Scripture record of it be produced. No such record exists. No such distinct officer was ever appointed. Whatever officer the term *angel* or *messenger* may be under-

stood to denote, it cannot mean one invested with supremacy or rule over other ministers in the church. No such episcopal supremacy or lordship existed among the ministers of Ephesus when Paul addressed them *all* as possessing the same office *equally* as *elders* or *presbyters*, and of *overseers* or *bishops*. "Take heed unto yourselves and to all the flock, over which the Holy Ghost hath made you *overseers*," or *bishops*, Acts xx. 28. Mr. Ashe says of episcopacy, "That it is the *most perfect* model of church government that occurs in the New Testament; and as it is the *last* recorded, we may reasonably conclude that it was established by the apostles in every completely organized church, and was designed to be of perpetual standing." Here Mr. Ashe admits that there is at least some other model of church government to be found in the New Testament, and which is recorded before this. This is an important concession. If episcopacy be the *most perfect* model, according to Mr. Ashe, and if it be, as he says, last recorded, it follows that there are others recorded in Scripture, which, though less perfect according to his views, are still Scriptural and Divine. All this to us sounds strange. Referring to Paul's address to the *elders* or *bishops* of Ephesus, already quoted, Paul an inspired and commissioned apostle, does not find any fault with their church government; and yet these elders were all *bishops* or *overseers*, and they were made so, he says, by the *Holy Ghost*. There was no lordship or supremacy of one bishop or elder here over his brother elders or bishops. We conclude that such superiority of one bishop or elder over the other pastors of the church is no institution of the Holy Ghost. It is contrary to the command and institution of Christ. "Be not ye called Rabbi; for one is your Master even *Christ*; and all ye are *brethren*." The minister is a ruler in the church, the members are the persons ruled: the minister is the *bishop* or *overseer*, and the members are the flock, over whom the *episcopacy*, that is being interpreted, the *overseeing* is exercised; but a ruler of rulers—a *bishop* of *bishops*—one minister of the church exercising dominion and lordship over the other ministers, is a thing unknown to the Scriptures. It had its commencement indeed very early, but it was one of the indications of that Antichrist which was already working, even in the apostles' days. Instead of receiving any countenance, it is especially rebuked by the apostles;—rebuked by Peter, whom some would elevate to a headship over the other apostles, which he would have abhorred. "The *elders* (or *presbyters*) among you," says Peter, "I exhort, who am also an *elder*, (or *pres-*

byter) feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the *oversight thereof*,"—that is, discharging the duty of *bishops*, or in other words, *overseers*, and that oversight or rule is over the *flock*, and *not* over one another. "Neither," adds the apostle, "as being *lords* over God's heritage, but ensamples to the flock," 1 Pet. v. 1—3. Mr. Ashe says of the episcopal form of government that "We may reasonably conclude that it was established by the apostles in every completely organized church, and was designed to be of perpetual standing." Now we contend that a different conclusion from that of Mr. Ashe is the reasonable and true conclusion. The churches organized by the apostles, were completely organized churches; the ordinary offices appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ, were offices of perfect model and of perpetual standing. The filling up of these offices was by guidance of the Holy Ghost: but, no superiority of rule of one pastor, or presbyter, or bishop, over his brother pastors, presbyters, or bishops, was set up by the apostles, instituted by Christ, sanctioned by the Holy Ghost, or recorded in Scripture. We therefore conclude that Episcopacy, instead of being the most perfect model of church government, is no proper model at all; instead of being found in the New Testament, it has no existence there; instead of being established by the apostles, it was established by those who were not apostles; instead of being a divine institution, it is a human invention; instead of being a creature of God, it is a creature of man; and instead of being of perpetual standing, it shall be purged away in the Millennial Reformation. Are we asked, what then do we understand by the *angel* of the church spoken of in the Revelation? We say, whatever it may mean, it cannot sanction Episcopacy. We may be right or wrong in the interpretation we put upon it; but our view of it is, that the *angel* is the symbol of the collective body of the ministers of the church. This is our view; and we proceed on the same principle that Mr. Ashe himself does, when he interprets the "*Woman Jezebel*, who calleth herself a prophetess," chap. ii. 20, to "denote a corrupt part of the church, as a woman signifies a church, and an unchaste woman, a corrupt church." On the same principle, we regard the *angel* of the church as a symbol signifying the embodied ministry of that church, acting as Christ's *messengers*, and bearing Christ's *commission*. The word *angel*, in these epistles in the Revelation, is often used to denote *many*. The singular pronoun *thou*, is frequently changed into the plural *you*, while the same person is still addressed. Thus Christ

says to the angel of the church in Smyrna, “Fear none of those things which *thou* shalt suffer ; behold the devil shall cast *some of you* into prison ; and *ye* shall have tribulation ten days : be *thou* faithful unto death.” From this we conclude, that the word angel is used not in an individual, but collective application ; and that it is a symbol of a church’s ministry.

From what we have said, many of our readers will doubtless be excited to procure Mr. Ashe’s work for themselves. We recommend it as an excellent manual and reference book to ministers, students, congregational libraries, reading societies, and reflecting persons in general. At the same time, we would recommend such works as those of Faber, Culbertson, M’Leod, Mason, Keith, and Cunningham, to be compared with the “Notes” of Mr. Ashe. Nothing is more dangerous than to resign our judgment entirely to any one writer on the Revelation, however judicious. The Revelation has mysteries, which, like the interior of Africa, the source of the Nile, or the North West passage, have not yet been explored. Mr. Ashe and other interpreters are, however, adventuring forth on the enterprise of discovery. When they are out, the church of God should follow them with her attention, her expectation and prayers ; and, when they return with the results of their inquiries, she should honour their pious labours, reward their exertions, and appropriate the riches which they lay at her feet.

LUTHER.

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### WAITING OUR LORD’S COMING.

THE church on earth is to be like a family sitting up at night to wait their master’s return from a public feast. It is considered as one and the same body, a corporation that never dies ; and though her individual members die and are replaced, still, from age to age, it is the same house and the same family waiting their Lord’s return. Generation after generation have died, not having received the promise of his coming, but they watched and waited not in vain. He discharged them individually from their watch, and took them to himself, to wait nearer his presence. For the glorious appearance of the great God and Saviour they waited and watched upon earth, amid toil and sorrow ; but it came not in their day, while they stood on their ward ; yet they kept their Lord’s command, and watched.—*Fry.*

## SIGNS OF THE TIMES.

NEVER, perhaps, in the history of man, were the times more ominous, or pregnant with greater events than the present. The signs of them are, in many respects, set before the eyes of men, and need not to be told ; and they strike the senses so forcibly, and come so closely to the apprehension of all, that they may be said to be felt, as well as to be seen. The face of the sky never indicated more clearly an approaching tempest, than the signs of the times betoken an approaching convulsion—not partial, but universal. It is not a single cloud, surcharged with electricity, on the rending of which a momentary flash might appear, and the thunderbolt shiver a pine, or scathe a few lowly shrubs, that is now rising into view ; but the whole atmosphere is lowering, a gathering storm is accumulating fearfully in every region, the lightning is already seen gleaming in the heavens, and passing in quick succession from one distant cloud to another, as if every tree in the forest would be enkindled, and the devastating tempest, before purifying the atmosphere, spread ruin on every side. Such is now the aspect of the political horizon. The whole world is in agitation. All kings on earth, whose words were wont to be laws, are troubled. The calm repose of ages, in which thrones and altars were held sacred, has been broken in a moment. Ancient monarchies, which seemed long to defy dissolution and to mock at time, pass away like a dream. And the question is not now of the death of a king, or even of the ceasing of one dynasty and the commencement of another ; but the whole fabric of government is insecure, the whole frame of society is shaken. Every kingdom, instead of each being knit together and dreaded by surrounding states, is divided against itself, as if dissolution were the sure destiny of them all. A citizen king, the choice of the people and not a military usurper, sits on the throne of the Capets. And as if the signal had gone throughout the world quick as lightning, nations, instead of progressing slowly to regeneration, start at once into life. And from the banks of the Don to the Tagus, from the shores of the Bosphorus to Lapland, and, wide Europe being too narrow a field for the spirit of change that now ranges simultaneously throughout the world, from the new states of South America to the hitherto unchangeable China, skirting Africa and traversing Asia, to the extremity of the globe on the frozen North, there are signs of change in every country under heaven ; and none can tell of what kingdom it may not be told in the news

of to-morrow, that a revolution has been begun and perfected in a week. Every kingdom seems but to wait for its day of revolt or revival. And the only wonder now would be, that any nation should continue much longer what for ages it has been; or that the signs of the times should not every where alike be a striking contrast to those of the past.—*Keith.*

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### TIME TO READ THE BIBLE.

THE want of time is frequently adduced by some Christians as an argument against studying the Bible. But this argument is spurious. It is suggested by the “father of lies,” who would gladly prevent every person from ever reading the Scriptures. This argument is generally offered by business men, and supported as they believe, by the well known plea, “business is driving.” But let those who will offer this gross excuse for not being faithful and diligent students of the word of God, look at some bright examples.

An acquaintance of the writer’s, who is now a living Christian, and is known to do as much business as any man in the metropolis where he resides, reads, together with their comments, six chapters in the Bible each day. Sir W. Jones, a profound student, well versed in 28 languages, says, “Amid all pursuits, the Bible is my constant study.” Boerhave, a distinguished philosopher, employed one hour in the morning in reading carefully the word of God. Sir Isaac Newton, who loved his mathematics as much as any man loves his business, appropriated a large portion of his time to the same purpose. And who can read Milton’s “Paradise Lost,” without discovering his extensive acquaintance with the Bible? Business men, “go and do likewise.” No man can virtually say he has no time for studying the Bible. There is time for all things. Our Creator has given us a revelation for a wise purpose.—*Christ. Spect.*

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### THE DYING CHRISTIAN FATHER.

How truly delightful and animating are the consolations and prospects of the good man in the prospect of death! Reader! ponder well on the scene which we now present to you, and fervently pray that it may be realized in your own happy experience. A relation one day said to the late Rev. William Day, of Bristol, “It is a comfort to you to see your children

round you." "Yes," he answered, with an allusion to the occasional dimness of his vision, "it is. It would be more so if I could see them. But I can only see one now and another then." "You can, however, see Jesus by the eye of faith?" His countenance kindled with a smile of joy, and clasping his hands, he exclaimed with a loud voice, "He is my great, my only object. O my God! my portion! my all! Blessed be thy name, thou hast said unto me, 'Thou art mine.'" Then with much energy he added, "The Bible is nothing to me—the Bible is nothing to me, but as it reveals to my soul a covenant Jehovah, Father, Son, and Holy Ghost. There I see perfection. When I look at man—when I look at myself, I see nothing but vileness: a rent here, a chasm there. It would drive me to despair. But when I look at Jehovah I am comforted. Oh! when"—he wept profusely—"when shall I behold Him as he is, and cast myself at his feet. He has afforded me a pledge of this beyond all your imagination can conceive. I have seen him rising before me in the majesty of the God-head. The world has shown me its favours, and has taken them away again. I have enjoyed many tokens of the loving-kindness of my God, and I have at other times been stripped of what I most valued. But, oh! my God, my Redeemer, THOU has never failed me." Then stretching out his hands to his family around his bed, he cried, "O Lord, shine forth—shine forth in thy glory upon these dear ones! Thou wilt never leave them—Thou wilt never forsake them." It was an affecting—a sublime scene. It was the patriarch standing on the threshold of heaven, looking back to bless his family, looking forward, and earnestly longing to take his last step.

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## DEPENDENCE ON THE SPIRIT OF GOD.

IF there be one truth of paramount importance, at the present day, it is that contained in the inspired declaration, *Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, saith the Lord of Hosts.* In view of the difficulties in the way of the conversion of the world, whose heart would not faint within him, were the work depending on the efficacy of human means? Who would not give up the enterprize in despair? The hindrances to the conversion of a single soul, are immense. What must they be in the regeneration of a world? We are not to look simply at a mass of depravity, however dark and appalling. There are systems of error and iniquity, each fortified and con-

solidated by their appropriate defences. It is as if the spirits of darkness had had each assigned to them a specific, a particular work, in which, with horrid rivalry, they had exhausted their mighty intellect of evil. What multitudes of men, in Christian nations, are spending their days in forming and maturing a character, which is at total variance with the requisitions of God's law? How deep and how dreadful are those clouds of error, which rest on the minds of a great majority of educated men, in reference to moral and religious subjects? How few nations conduct any of their important measures on the principles of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? How few statesmen prefer the good of the whole human race, to the glory and happiness of their own country? How few of our periodical publications are *thoroughly* Christian? They may laud Christianity *in general*, to the skies, and yet come to a particular institution, like that of the Sabbath, without which religion itself cannot exist, and you find them bitter opposers.

But we need not despair. Thanks be to God, it is not by might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord of Hosts. There is a mighty agency whieh we do not see with our eyes, at work in this world. We cannot discern the form thereof; we can see no image; but the same energy which operates silently in the world of matter, operates as surely in the world of mind. He who formed the mind, can change the mind. He can scatter the thick mists of prejudice, and reveal to the soul the perfect beauty of truth. He can induce men to abhor themselves, and repent in dust and ashes; and as their eyes open on a holy Saviour, to exclaim, Whom have I in heaven but thee, and there is none on earth that we desire in comparison to thee! He can open the two-leaved gates, and cut in sunder the bars of iron. He is with kings on their thrones, and is able to abase those who walk in pride. The systems of heathenism and idolatry, though grown up to heaven, he can consume with the breath of his mouth, and destroy with the brightness of his coming. Through all the abominations in Christian countries, He can send the healing waters of the river of life. The erroneous maxims in politics, the false theories in morals, by his Almighty influence, can be made to give way to the pure and heavenly precepts of the Gospel of Christ.

Here, then, let us place our confidence. The mighty men of past ages here found firm support. Out of *weakness* they were made strong. They went from prayer to the den of lions; from the closet to the conflict; from communion with God to the embrace of the burning stake. In themselves all weakness;

in Christ mightier than legions of enemies, visible and invisible. Here let us place our confidence—always abounding in the work of the Lord, as knowing that our labour is not in vain IN THE LORD.

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### SELF-EXAMINATION, FOR THE CLOSE OF THE SABBATH.

1. WHAT have I learned upon this holy day ?
  2. What have I done towards converting a world to Christ ?
  3. What influence have I exerted over the impenitent around me ?
  4. Have I *preached the Gospel* in my capacity ?
  5. Have I lived as if this was to be the last Sabbath which I should spend on earth ?
  6. Have I advanced a Sabbath-day's journey towards heaven ?
  7. Am I now prepared to render an account for all the Sabbaths which I have spent in this world, and abide the sentence of my Maker ?
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### A PLEASING DISCOVERY.

ENTERING the dry goods store of a respectable merchant one day, I saw the owner looking intently into the money drawer. I naturally thought that in the absence of customers he was counting his gains. But when he raised his head I thought there was an expression in his countenance more noble than of avarice. It did not seem like the lustre reflected from coin, but, as was beautifully expressed by one, there seemed to shine "a beam from heaven which may be supposed to have accompanied the thoughts back to earth that had just been expatiating above." Requiring some change after I had made my purchase, my curiosity induced me to cast a glance into the drawer when it was again opened, and there in one apartment lay an open Bible. While I felt a reproof from the monitor within, the thought also struck me that I had now discovered the cause of this brother's eminent attainment in piety, that in the most afflictive bereavement he had been favoured to "rejoice in the Lord, and to joy in the God of his salvation." His Bible is cherished and loved, and read in the midst of business; and though it may be surrounded with what the world worships.

NARRATOR.

THE REV. JOSEPH O'REILLY.—IN our last number we noticed the lamented death of this faithful servant of God, and able Christian pastor. In early life, Mr. O'Reilly belonged to the Church of Rome. The divine blessing on the reading of the Scriptures opened his eyes to the awful errors of Popery, and he was led to embrace the doctrines of the glorious Reformation. As a minister of the Presbyterian Secession Church, he preached a free, full, and everlasting salvation through Jesus Christ. His heart delighted in the *grace* of salvation. Alike opposed to Arminian glosses and Antinomian presumption, he held the doctrines usually designated Calvinistic, as the *real* and *Scriptural* exhibition of free grace. His death-bed was in the highest degree instructive, and even consolatory. Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost, he yielded his redeemed spirit into the hands of his Saviour. We pray God to comfort his bereaved family, and provide for his shepherdless flock.

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## TO OUR READERS AND SUPPORTERS.

THE fourth year of the *Christian Freeman* has closed; and now the bustling “note of preparation” announces the approach of a new campaign. A necessity well known to the religious world, and strongly felt by the ministers and people of the Presbyterian Secession Church, called our favourite Periodical into being: the same necessity exists still, and sternly demands its continuance. We dwell not on the importance of the *Christian Freeman* as a piece of defensive armour; nor need we do more than remind our brethren, that the simple possession of a weapon is a great security against attack. These are among the least important advantages of such a Periodical; yet they are by no means to be rejected.

But the conductors of the *Christian Freeman* specially delight in an atmosphere of peace. One of their leading aims is to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. They would follow peace with all men, remembering that he whom they profess to serve is the Prince of peace. They would use the instrumentality which God has appointed for bringing home to every heart the peace which passeth all understanding. Satisfied, too, that this can never be accomplished by a trimming, time-serving spirit, they would erect peace on the foundation of *the truth*. Following, though at an humble distance, the fathers of the Secession, the Erskines, and Fishers, and Wilsons of other days, they would hold up God's truth in opposition to all the errors and heresies which are propagated in its sacred name. The *Christian Freeman* has denounced the Erastianism of the Church of Scotland—it has exposed the enormities of the law of patronage—it has laid bare the paltry expediency which has dictated recent measures on this ques-

tion in the General Assembly—and it *may be* called upon to lift a loud and warning voice to the people of our own loved land to beware of the curse of Erastianism. We can appeal to our past conduct as the best guarantee for pacific editorial deportment; and, though we cannot promise ourselves or the churches unmixed peace, we can pledge word and character that our best efforts shall be devoted to the establishment of genuine peace on the basis of the *truth*.

A religious periodical must necessarily fall into the hands of persons of all variety of knowledge, attainments, feelings, and degrees of general and Christian cultivation. Its pages must, therefore, exhibit a corresponding variety in the kind of *materiel*, and in the moulding spirit by which it is thrown into different forms. The Bible is a splendid model. What diversity of sentiment, emotion, passion, illustration, beams forth on the living page of Scripture. We have felt the difficulty—we have grappled with the difficulty—of meeting the demand for diversified matter which Ulster made upon us: how far we have failed or succeeded must be left to the decision of our readers.

In one department of deep interest we acknowledge that the *Christian Freeman* has been hitherto culpably defective. We allude to the portion of its pages set apart for recording the struggles and the triumphs of the Missionary enterprize. It was not indeed silent in the chorus of countless voices which celebrate the advancing and spreading glories of Immanuel's cross. It sympathized with the Home and Foreign dissemination of the blessings of Christianity. Nay, there were times in which, with sublime and generous joy, it was rapt in prospect of the world's conversion to God. Still, the subject of Missions did not receive attention proportioned to its magnitude; and, above all, the outposts of the Secession Church in Ireland were not adequately cheered on in the contest with darkness and superstition. But this evil will be remedied. We are happy in being able to announce that, at the present moment, negotiations are in progress between the editors of the *Christian Freeman* and the Home Mission Committee of the Presbyterian Secession Synod, for enriching our pages with valuable and authentic Missionary intelligence. Our readers may confidently calculate, that arrangements the most complete and satisfactory will supply the information for which we rejoice to find among them a growing anxiety.

We have to apologise to all parties concerned for the late appearance of the number for October. No hand of ours can

lay an arrest on the march of disease and death. Mr. Rea, our publisher, is no more: and while his departure is a source of sincere but not hopeless mourning to his friends, it has bereft us of his valuable services towards the close of the year, when they are most essential. Owing to this cause, the publication of the present number has been retarded, and we shall require a little time to be fully prepared for the engagements of the ensuing year. On mature deliberation, we have resolved to close the present *series* of the *Christian Freeman*; and to commence a **NEW SERIES**, with such alterations and improvements as shall render the work still more worthy of the patronage of the Christian public. The *first* number of the **CHRISTIAN FREEMAN, New Series**, will appear on the first of January, eighteen hundred and thirty-seven. Superintended by ministers and people of the Presbyterian Secession Church, to *them* the *Christian Freeman* looks mainly for support. We have some of the best agents in the kingdom. Let others of a similar stamp join our standard. We know the *latent* energy of the Secession in the North of Ireland; admirable specimens of it have been already drawn from concealment by our Periodical. Let agents and friends gird themselves to the work with awakened activity, and we promise not to be wanting in our efforts to retain our elevated position in the field of religious periodical literature. Our agents and supporters have the object completely in their power; let them not leave it unaccomplished.

For the past, let the arrears due for the *Christian Freeman* be immediately forwarded to Mr. Rea, 17, Waring-street, that the accounts of our late publisher may be settled with the utmost possible despatch; and that the *New Series* may have a *fair and honourable start*.

For the present, let ministers and elders, and other agents who have kindly co-operated in the good cause, enlarge the circle of our supporters. There is no time to be lost. Lists for subscribers' names will accompany to town and country the present number. Let these be filled up without delay, and the number of the names, with the amount of subscriptions, forwarded to the Tract Depository, 17, Waring-street. Our *New Series* "expects every man to do his duty."

## THE CHRISTIAN FREEMAN.